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The
Electoral
Commission

Media Handbook

Senedd elections

Thursday 6 May 2021

Media contacts and resources

Media contacts

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Our channels

[Like us on Facebook](#)
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Websites

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

This website is where the public can register to vote online. It is quick and easy to use. Since its launch in June 2014, millions of applications to register to vote have been submitted. Wherever possible, please refer to this site in media coverage about the election to ensure members of the public know where to register.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Electoral Commission website has a dedicated section for journalists featuring its press releases and statements. It has information on political party donations in the run-up to the election and has a guidance section with information for candidates and those administering the election.

The website also provides information for the public on how to register and vote, including forms they can print off to register and apply to vote by post or proxy. It has a postcode search facility allowing people to find contact details for their local electoral registration office as well as polling station and candidate details.

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Logistics

What elections are taking place on 6 May?

Senedd elections are taking place across Wales on Thursday 6 May 2021. These elections are taking place alongside Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

The Senedd has powers to make laws for Wales on a range of areas including health, the economy, education, housing, some taxes and transport.

The Senedd is made up of 60 Members of the Senedd (MSs) who are elected by the people of Wales to represent them. 40 MSs represent Wales' constituencies and 20 MSs represent five regions: North Wales, Mid and West Wales, South Wales West, South Wales East, and South Wales Central.

You can vote in the Senedd elections if you are an eligible resident in Wales who will be 16 or over on Thursday 6 May. See page 20 for more details.

Roles and responsibilities at the poll

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)

Electoral Registration Officers (or EROs) are responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral registers and list of absent voters within their area. They must ensure that the electoral registers are as accurate and complete as possible.

Constituency Returning Officer

The Constituency Returning Officer (sometimes known as a CRO) is responsible for:

- administering the nominations of candidates at the constituency contest
- the conduct of the poll
- the counting of votes for both the constituency election and that part of the regional contest that is included within the constituency.

The CRO is also responsible not only for the delivery of the Senedd election in their constituency, but also for the combined elements of the poll.

Regional Returning Officer

Each of the five Regional Returning Officers (sometimes known as RROs) are responsible for:

- publication of the notice of election for the regional contest
- administration of the nomination process for the regional contest
- collation and calculation of the number of votes given for each individual candidate and political party; and
- declaration of the regional result.

The RRO will also be a CRO and will be designated by Welsh Ministers.

Presiding Officers

Presiding Officers are appointed by relevant ROs to run polling stations. Duties include organising the layout of the polling station, supervising poll clerks, issuing ballot papers, assisting voters, accounting for all ballot papers and ensuring that ballot boxes are transported securely to the count venue.

The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity. Our role in these elections is to:

- produce guidance for ROs and EROs, set performance standards and report on how electoral administrators perform against these standards
- produce guidance for candidates standing for election and their agents
- produce guidance for parties that are campaigning at the election
- produce guidance for non-party campaigners that are campaigning at the election
- register political parties and non-party campaigners
- raise public awareness of the elections and how to take part in them
- report on the conduct of the elections
- publish details of where political parties get their money from and how they spend it.

Senedd elections timetable

Event	Date (deadline if not midnight)
Publication of notice of election	No later than Monday 29 March
Deadline for delivery of nomination papers	On any working day by no later than 4pm on Thursday 8 April
Deadline for withdrawing nominations	4pm on Thursday 8 April
Publication of statement of persons nominated	Not later than 4pm on Friday 9 April
Deadline to apply to register to vote	Monday 19 April
Deadline to apply to vote by post, postal proxy applications, and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes	5pm on Tuesday 20 April
Deadline for new proxy vote applications	5pm on Tuesday 27 April
Publication of notice of poll	4pm on Friday 9 April
Polling day	7am to 10pm on Thursday 6 May
Deadline to apply for a replacement for spoilt or lost postal votes	5pm on Thursday 6 May
Deadline for emergency proxy applications	5pm on Thursday 6 May

Candidates

What are the different types of candidate at the Senedd election?

- **Constituency candidates** are candidates standing for election within one of the 40 constituencies in Wales.
- **Regional party list candidates** are candidates standing on a party list for one of the 20 regional seats in Wales. A party can list up to 12 regional candidates in each of the 5 regions.
- **Independent regional candidates** who are not standing on behalf of a party, can stand for election in one of the 5 regions and 40 constituencies Wales.

A candidate can stand for both a constituency and a region, so long as the constituency is within the region. If they do this, they must stand for the same party in both contests, or be an independent in both contests. If they are elected at the constituency election, their name will be disregarded at the allocation of regional seats. A person cannot stand in more than one constituency or in more than one region.

Who can become a candidate?

Anyone who wants to stand at Senedd election must be:

- at least 18 years old on the day of nomination; and
- a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of a member state of the European Union or a qualifying foreign citizen.

A candidate at the Senedd election is not required to be registered as an elector or live in the constituency or region in which they wish to stand.

Are there any rules barring a candidate from standing?

The rules around standing for election and the disqualifications that apply are complex. Further information can be found in [Part 1 of the Commission's guidance for candidates](#). You can also access the [Senedd Disqualification Order](#).

How does someone become a constituency candidate at the Senedd election?

Prospective constituency candidates at the May 2021 Senedd elections, must submit the following to their Returning Officer by 5pm on Thursday 8 April.

- a completed nomination, home address and consent to nominations forms
- a deposit of £500.

To stand on behalf of a registered political party, the party must be registered on the Commission's [register of political parties](#) and be listed as allowed to field candidates in Wales. Candidates standing on behalf of a party will also need to submit:

- a certificate of authorisation from the party that allows them to use the party name, description and emblem on the ballot paper
- a written request to use one of the party's registered emblems (optional).

Candidates not standing on behalf of a party may use the description 'Independent' and/or 'Annibynno!' or no description at all, and cannot use an emblem.

For more detailed guidance on how to stand as a constituency candidate see [Part 2a of the Commission's guidance for candidates and agents](#).

How does someone become a regional candidate at the Senedd election?

There are two types of regional candidates at Senedd elections:

- those who are nominated by a political party to stand on the party's list
- those who stand as individual candidates.

If standing on behalf of a registered political party then the Nominating Officer of that registered political party may submit a list of up to 12 candidates to stand at a regional election. The party must list the candidates in the order they are to be elected. The party list nomination form, and a consent to nomination for each candidate on the party list, together with a deposit of £500, must be delivered to the Regional Returning Officer by 5pm on 8 April 2021.

Prospective individual candidates at the Senedd elections need to submit the following to the Regional Returning Officer by 5pm on 8 April 2021:

- a completed nomination form, and a consent to nomination
- a deposit of £500.

For more detailed guidance on how to stand as a regional candidate see [Part 2b of our guidance for candidates and agents](#).

Can someone stand as a constituency and regional candidate?

A person can be a candidate for both a constituency and a region, so long as the constituency is within the region where they are standing. To do this they must stand for the same party in both contests, or be an independent in both contests. If elected at the constituency election, then that candidate's name will be disregarded at the allocation of regional seats.

A person cannot stand in more than one constituency or in more than one region.

When will we know who all of the candidates are?

The relevant Returning Officer will publish the full list of candidates standing. This will happen in most cases by 4pm on Friday 9 April.

To find out how and where they will publish this list, you will need to contact them directly. Contact details for Regional Returning Officers and Constituency Returning Officers are included in Appendix A.

Campaigning at the election

When can candidates start campaigning?

Candidates can start campaigning at any time. They do not have to wait until they are validly nominated to declare that they will run for election, ask people to support them or publish campaign material.

Election spending limits apply from the day after a person officially becomes a candidate..

What can candidates say about one another during the campaign?

As at all elections, it is illegal to make a false statement about the personal character of a candidate in order to influence the result of the election. Rules about defamation also apply to election materials.

The police may investigate allegations of the specific electoral offence of making a false statement. Defamation issues are a matter for the civil courts.

As with all elections, the Electoral Commission does not have a regulatory role in relation to the content of campaign material or what candidates say about each other, though we encourage all campaigners to undertake their vital role responsibly and to support campaign transparency.

Are there any electoral rules regarding campaign materials?

By law, candidates, parties and non-party campaigners must use 'imprints' on all their printed campaign material. An imprint includes the name and address of the printer and promoter (the person who authorised the material to be printed). It must be included on all printed material such as posters, placards and leaflets. This is so that electors can be clear about the source of the campaign material. It is an offence not to include an imprint on printed election material.

Though it is not a legal requirement, the Electoral Commission recommends that candidates, parties and non-party campaigners wherever possible, place an imprint on their electronic materials (e.g. websites, emails and social media platforms). Voters need to know who is targeting them with political messages online and we have called for the law to be changed.

Can candidates see the electoral register?

Once someone becomes a candidate, they are entitled to receive, free of charge, a copy of the full electoral register and the lists of people voting by post or proxy (the absent voters' lists) for the whole of the area that they are contesting.

Candidates may only use the full electoral register to help them complete their nomination form, to campaign and to check that donations they receive come from a permissible source.

Candidates must not release any details that appear in the electoral register. This does not apply to details which appear on the open register which is available for general sales.

Spending limits and rules on accepting donations

Regulated period

What is the regulated period for the Senedd elections?

The regulated period for constituency and independent regional candidates begins the day after someone officially becomes a candidate and ends on polling day, 6 May 2021. The earliest date someone can officially become a candidate is 21 days before the poll, and can be no later than the close of nominations (5pm Thursday 8 April). Spending towards regional party list candidacies fall under the rules for party spending.

Spending

How much can candidates spend on their election campaigns?

The spending limits for the Senedd elections are below. The spending limit for constituency candidates and independent regional candidates is calculated by adding together a base amount and a variable top up, that takes into account the number of registered electors in the constituency or region the candidate is contesting.

Type of candidate	Fixed amount	Variable amount
Constituency candidate	£8,700	6p per registered elector in a borough or constituency, or 9p per registered parliamentary elector in a county constituency
Independent regional candidate	N/A	The total of the maximum limit for each constituency in the region.
Regional party list candidate	campaign spending and donations are reported by the party , and any spending will count towards the party spending limit.	Spending will be included in the party spending limit (see Section B)
Independent dual candidate	£8,700	6p per registered elector in a borough constituency, or 9p per registered parliamentary elector in a county constituency. They may also spend the total maximum limit for each constituency in the region.

Party dual candidate	<p>£8,700</p> <p>all campaign spending toward the regional party list candidacy will be party spending, and must be reported by the party</p>	<p>6p per registered elector in a borough or constituency, or 9p per registered parliamentary elector in a county constituency. Spending on promoting the party list will be included in the party spending limit (see section B)</p>
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What activities count towards the spending limit?

Candidate spending includes the costs of:

- advertising of any kind, such as posters, newspaper adverts, websites or social media
- unsolicited material sent to voters, such as letters, leaflets or emails that are not sent in response to specific queries
- transport costs, such as hire cars or public transport for the candidate or candidate's campaigners
- public meetings
- staff costs, such as an agent's salary, or staff seconded to a candidate
- accommodation, such as a campaign office
- administrative costs, such as telephone bills, stationery, photocopying and the use of databases

Activities that do not count include:

- anything appearing in a newspaper or on a licensed broadcast channel with the exception of adverts
- costs that are reasonably attributable to the candidate's disability
- facilities used because the candidate is entitled to do so as a candidate, such as a public room for a meeting
- volunteer time including time spent by staff that the candidate does not pay them for
- use of someone's main residence, provided free of charge
- use of someone's personal car or other means of transport acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge

- use of someone's computing or printing equipment acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge
- a candidate's deposit
- postage costs relating to the free election address
- reasonable costs relating to translation from English to Welsh or vice versa

Who is responsible for candidate spending?

It is the responsibility of the candidate's agent (or the candidate, if they act as their own agent) to fully and accurately report spending. Both the candidate and the agent should ensure they understand the rules and that all spending is properly authorised, recorded and reported. Both the candidate and the agent must make a declaration that their reporting is accurate, making this statement falsely is an offence.

Donations

What counts as a donation?

A donation is money, goods, property or services which are given to a candidate, without charge or on non-commercial terms, and have a value of over £50.

Anything with a value of £50 or less does not count as a donation.

Who can make donations to candidates?

Candidates must ensure that any donation worth more than £50 is only accepted if it is from a permissible source. This applies to cash donations and donations in kind.

Donations that are not from a permissible source must be returned to the donor within 30 days. After that, the donation may be forfeited.

Permissible donors in the UK are defined as:

- an individual on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors
- a GB registered political party
- a UK registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK
- a UK registered trade union
- a UK registered building society
- a UK registered limited liability partnership that carries on business in the UK
- a UK registered friendly society

- a UK based unincorporated association that carries on business or other activity wholly or mainly in the UK and has its main office in the UK

Campaigning by political parties

Regulated period

When do the rules on campaign spending apply to political parties at these elections?

The regulated period for the 2021 Senedd election, begins on 6 January 2021 and ends on polling day, 6 May 2021.

What is the spending limit for parties?

Political parties have a maximum spending limit of £600,000 if they contest every constituency and region. There are 40 constituencies in Wales and five regions. A party's spending limit is based on a limit of £10,000 per constituency that they contest and £40,000 for each region they contest. The spending limit is a national limit, which means parties do not have to attribute their spending between constituencies and regions.

A party calculates their spending by working out how many constituencies and regions that they are contesting in the Senedd election, and multiplying these numbers by the spending limit for the constituency and/or region.

For more information on party spending limits see our [guidance for political parties campaigning at the 2021 Senedd election](#).

What activities count as spending?

Activities included in campaign spending are:

- advertising of any kind, for example, street banners, websites or YouTube videos
- unsolicited material sent to voters. For example, letters or leaflets that aren't in response to specific queries
- the manifesto and other documents setting out a party's policies
- market research or other methods of finding out how people intend to vote
- press conferences or other dealings with the media

- rallies and events, including the cost of people's attendance, and any goods, services or facilities provided
- transport in connection with publicising the campaign.

If a party is entitled to a party election broadcast then the production costs must be included as campaign spending. The value of the airtime does not need to be included.

If a party is standing candidates on a regional list, party campaign spending will also include spending on activities to promote the party list candidates.

It includes:

- items or services bought before the regulated period begins, but used during it
- items or services given to the party free of charge or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%.

Party constituency candidates standing for election in a constituency are responsible for their own campaign spending. Spending on promoting their candidacy in the constituency will count towards their own candidate spending limit. If a party candidate is standing in both a constituency and a region, it is only the spending on promoting the candidate in the region that will count towards the party spending limit.

What doesn't count as spending?

Activities not included in campaign spending are:

- permanent, fixed term or temporary staff costs where the staff member has a direct employment contract with the party
- volunteer time
- office running costs, except costs that are higher than usual because of campaigning, such as telephone bills
- people's travel, food and accommodation costs while they campaign, unless they are reimbursed.
- expenses met out of public funds, for example, security costs for VIP visits
- material sent only to your members
- party conferences
- local newsletters about elected representatives or prospective candidates
- anything a candidate properly declares on their spending return
- regional party list candidates' deposits
- postage costs relating to the election address promoting the party or regional party candidates

- any reasonable costs relating to translating from English to Welsh or visa versa. For example, hiring a translator to translate campaign material from English into Welsh
- reasonable costs attributable to a disability a candidate may have. This exemption applies to any costs incurred by or Senedd elections 2021 on behalf of any type of candidate including party regional list candidates. For example, the costs associated with providing braille documentation for a party list candidate with a sight disability.

Is there a limit on donations that a political party can accept in the run up the Senedd elections?

No. However, parties can only accept donations worth more than £500 towards their campaign from a permissible source.

For more information on donations, including guidance on what is a permissible source, see our [overview of donations to political parties](#).

Rules for non-party campaigners

What organisations or individuals will be classed as non-party campaigners at the Senedd elections?

Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in the run-up to elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates.

When is the regulated period?

Spending on regulated campaign activity is regulated in the run-up to the 2021 elections in Wales.

For general campaigns, the regulated period for the Senedd election in 2021 begins on 6 January 2021 and will end on polling day, 6 May 2021.

For local campaigns, the regulated period starts the day after the person someone is campaigning for or against officially becomes a candidate and ends on polling day, 6 May 2021.

What types of non-party campaigns are there?

There are two types of non-party campaigns. These are:

- **Local campaigns:** non-party campaigns for or against one or more candidates in a particular constituency, ward or other electoral area.
- **General campaigns:** non-party campaigns for or against a political party, or particular categories of candidate, including campaigns on policies or issues closely associated with a particular party or category of candidates (for example, candidates in a certain age group).

For an overview of the rules and more detail on rules for non-party campaigners, see our [guidance for non-party campaigners campaigning at the Senedd elections](#).

What counts as regulated campaign spending?

Spending on these activities will be regulated, if they are intended to influence voters to vote for or against political parties or categories of candidates, including political parties or categories of candidates who support or do not support particular policies or issues:

- press conferences or other media events that they organise
- transport in connection with publicising the campaign

Spending on the following activities is only regulated if the activities are also aimed at, seen or heard by, or involve the public. This applies to:

- the production or publication of election material
- canvassing and market research (including the use of phone banks)
- public rallies and public events

Spending on any of these activities will be regulated if the activity can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against a political party, or categories of candidates, including campaigns on policies or issues closely associated with a particular party or category of candidates.

What are the spending limits for non-party campaigners in Wales?

General campaigns:

The spending limit for non-party campaigners will depend on whether they register with the Electoral Commission as a registered non-party campaigner.

Not registered	£10,000 in Wales
Registered non-party campaigner	£30,000 in Wales

Local campaigns:

There is a limit of £500 for campaigns for or against a constituency candidate and a limit of £1,000 for campaigns for or against an independent regional candidate. Campaigns for or against a party list candidate will fall under the general campaign rules.

Who can register with the Electoral Commission as a non-party campaigner?

Only the following types of individuals or organisations can register and become a registered non-party campaigner:

- an individual registered on a UK electoral register, or resident in the UK
- a UK-registered political party (including 'minor parties')
- a UK-registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK
- a UK-registered trade union
- a UK-registered building society
- a UK-registered Limited Liability partnership which carries on business in the UK
- a UK-registered friendly, industrial, provident or building society
- a UK-based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK a body incorporated by Royal Charter
- a UK charitable incorporated organisation
- a Scottish partnership which carries on business in the UK.

What is considered a donation to a non-party campaigner?

Registered non-party campaigners must ensure that the rules on donations are followed. A donation is money, goods, property or services with a value over £500 and is given:

- towards their regulated campaign spending
- without charge or on non-commercial terms

Anything with a value of £500 or less is not a donation.

Who can non-party campaigners accept donations from?

Non-party campaigners can only accept donations from a permissible source.

A permissible source is:

- an individual registered on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors and those leaving bequests
- a UK-registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business within the UK
- a UK-registered trade union
- a UK-registered building society
- a UK-registered limited liability partnership (LLP) that carries on business in the UK
- a UK-registered friendly society
- a UK unincorporated association that is based and carries on business or other activities in the UK.

Voters

Registering to vote

Who can vote in Senedd elections?

A person can vote in the Senedd elections if they are registered to vote in Wales, will be 16 years old or over on Thursday 6 May, and are:

- a British or Irish citizen, or
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK, or does not require such leave, or
- a citizen of a European Union country, or
- a qualifying foreign citizen who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission

More information on eligibility can be found on our website at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter>.

What is the registration deadline?

The deadline to apply to register is midnight on Monday 19 April 2021.

What is the deadline for applying to vote by post or by proxy?

The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm, Tuesday 20 April 2021.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote, except in an emergency, is 5pm, Tuesday 27 April 2021.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote as a result of an emergency is 5pm, Thursday 6 May 2021.

How can someone register to vote?

Voters can register to vote online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. People can still apply by completing a paper registration form if they prefer. They can contact their local electoral registration office for forms or download them on the [UK Government's website](#).

Changes to the franchise in Wales

Following the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020 anyone aged 16 or over on polling day can vote in the 2021 Senedd elections. This includes qualifying foreign citizens. A qualifying foreign citizen is someone who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission.

Can someone register at two different addresses?

In some cases voters may be eligible to register at two different addresses, for example, if they own two homes or if they are a student living away from home. It is for the local Electoral Registration Officer to determine whether someone is eligible to register. However, it is an offence to vote twice in the same election.

How do members of the armed services register and vote?

Service personnel and their spouses or civil partners, serving in the UK or overseas, can register either at their home address or their barracks in the usual way, or as a 'service voter'. Service voters fill out an armed services declaration so they can be registered when away from their home address on duty.

Can prisoners vote?

Remand prisoners (those who have not been convicted and sentenced) can vote. Convicted prisoners detained because of their sentence cannot.

In some limited circumstances, prisoners released on temporary licence may meet the criteria to register to vote.

Public awareness

What is the Electoral Commission doing to encourage people to register to vote?

The Commission will run two voter registration campaigns in Wales from 8 March until the registration deadline of 19 April.

The 'Got 5?' campaign targets the whole electorate, encouraging them to take 5 minutes out of their day to register to vote online, particularly if they've recently moved. The 'Welcome to your vote' campaign, targets the newly enfranchised in Wales (16-17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens) encouraging them to register and take part in democracy. Advertising for both campaigns will take place on video-on-demand, radio, online search and social channels, supported by additional PR activity.

A bilingual household information booklet for the Senedd and Police and Crime Commissioner elections will also be sent to all households in Wales during the week commencing 05 April. The booklet contains key election and voting information and will be available in a range of formats and languages.



What resources are available for young people?

To reflect the new voting age for the Senedd elections the Commission has created political literacy resources for 14-18 year olds and educators. The resources are designed to help young people understand what they can vote for, what to expect in elections, and how to cast their vote, so they feel confident to take part in upcoming elections and know that their vote matters. They include videos, quizzes, handbooks and PowerPoint presentations all available on our website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/learning.

The Commission has been working in partnership with the Senedd Commission on a series of 'Votes at 16' train the trainer sessions, [available to be booked online](#) by educators looking to run their own Votes at 16 sessions.

Commission Officers are also able to deliver a limited number of virtual sessions to schools and youth groups in Wales before the registration deadline. We can deliver sessions to 14-18 year olds of any ability, up to a class size of 30. Schools can complete [this form](#) to arrange a session.

Partnership work

The Commission is working with a range of partner organisations across Wales to reach traditionally under-registered or disengaged voters as well as the newly enfranchised. Current partners include RNIB Cymru, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Boys and Girls Clubs Wales, Diverse Cymru, the Welsh Refugee Council and many more. A recent example of our partnership work is our joint [blog with RNIB Cymru](#) to mark International Day of Person's with Disabilities.

We have a number of resources available for partners who would like to share our voter information and registration messages on the [democratic engagement section](#) of our website including:

- polling station safety assets (posters, social graphics)
- 'Welcome to your vote' assets (posters, social graphics and copy, web banners, FAQ document for qualifying foreign citizens in Arabic, Urdu, Polish, Chinese and Bengali)
- 'Got 5?' assets (posters, social graphics, web banners)
- press release, FAQ and shielding letter templates for local authorities
- [political literacy resources](#) for educators and young people.
- [voter registration newsletter](#)

Any organisation that would like to discuss partnership working can get in touch with the Commission's Wales Office.

The voting process

The Electoral Commission has produced a [media handbook](#) with further information on how the voting process will take place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Information in that handbook supplements the information here.

When will polling stations be open?

All polling stations open at 7am and close at 10pm.

What happens if someone is still queuing to vote at a polling station at 10pm?

Any voter who arrives at the polling station before 10pm and is still waiting to vote at 10pm **will be able to vote**.

Which voting systems are used?

The Senedd is made up of 40 constituency and 20 regional Members of the Senedd (MS).

Constituency members are elected using the first-past-the-post system.

The Returning Officer declares the candidate with the most votes to be the winner and elected to represent the constituency.

Regional members are elected using the additional member system (AMS).

The additional member system is a form of proportional representation. This means that as well as the 40 constituency Members of the Senedd (MSs) who are elected using the first-past-the-post system, there are 20 regional MSs who are elected using the party list system. There are five electoral regions in Wales and each returns four regional MSs.

Regional members are elected using a party list system. Each Constituency Returning Officer notifies the Regional Returning Officer of the number of votes cast for each registered political party and individual candidate in their part of the region, as well as details of the number of constituency seats gained by each registered political party.

The Regional Returning Officer then adds up the total regional votes from all of the constituencies in their region. They also add up the total number of constituency seats won within the region by each registered party.

The number of votes cast in the regional ballot for each registered party or individual candidate is divided by the number of constituency seats gained, plus one. This allows parties or individual candidates that have not won any constituencies or who have not stood in a constituency contest to be included in the rest of the calculation.

After that calculation is done, the party with the highest resulting figure gains the first regional seat. To allocate the second, third and fourth regional seats the calculation is redone, but each time any additional seats gained are added into the calculation.

This method of calculation is known as the modified d'Hondt system.

How do voters complete their ballot papers for the Senedd elections?





The constituency ballot paper

A voter will use this ballot paper to vote for a candidate to represent their constituency. In order to vote they need to mark a cross (X) in the box opposite the name of one candidate. The candidate with the most votes becomes the Member of the Senedd for that constituency.






The regional ballot paper

A voter will use this ballot paper to vote for a party or individual candidate to represent their region. In order to vote, they mark a cross (X) in the box opposite the name of one party or individual candidate. In each region, parties and individual candidates win seats based on:

- the number of votes they receive in this regional ballot, and
- the number of constituency seats that parties or individual candidates win in the region.

Senedd Cymru election Ballot paper to elect the Member of the Senedd for the constituency	Etholiad Senedd Cymru Papur pleidleisio i ethol Aelod o'r Senedd ar gyfer etholaeth.....
Vote for only one candidate by putting a cross (X) in the box next to your choice	Pleidleiswch ar gyfer un ymgeisydd yn unig trwy roi croes (X) yn y blwch wrth ochr eich dewis
Candidate A - Ymgeisydd A Party A - Plaid A	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate B - Ymgeisydd B Party B - Plaid B	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate C - Ymgeisydd C Party C - Plaid C	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate D - Ymgeisydd D Party D - Plaid D	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate E - Ymgeisydd E Independent / Annibynnol	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate F - Ymgeisydd F Independent / Annibynnol	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate G - Ymgeisydd G Independent / Annibynnol	<input type="checkbox"/>

Example constituency ballot paper

Senedd Cymru election Ballot paper to elect the Member of the Senedd for theregion	Etholiad Senedd Cymru Papur pleidleisio i ethol Aelod o'r Senedd ar gyfer rhanbarth.....
Vote only once by putting a cross (X) in the box next to your choice	Pleidleiswch unwaith yn unig trwy roi croes (X) yn y blwch wrth ochr eich dewis
Bloggs Party	
1. Ali Barber 2. Dusty Boots 3. Earl Grey 4. Robin Hood 5. Mary Contrary	6. Blossom Tree 7. Roger James 8. August Caesar 9. Sierra Leone 10. Apple Orchard
 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Cromwell Party	
1. Terry Teller 2. Jane Doe 3. John Smith 4. Harper Graham 5. Benedict Eggs	6. Orion Belt 7. Anita Patel 8. Blu Sapphire 9. William Finn 10. Santa Valentine
 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Nightingale Party	
1. Charles Bucket 2. Kris Kringle 3. Hamish Soot 4. Pepper Pott 5. Susannah Salt	6. Basil Bush 7. Sunny Day 8. Rain Storm 9. April Showers 10. Winston Wonder
 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Pelican Party	
1. Michael Angelos 2. Suki Moon 3. May Day 4. River Deep 5. Dallas Cowboy	6. Victoria Line 7. Briana Spears 8. Sandy Shore 9. Roman Ruin 10. Edward Conqueror
 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Tudor Party	
1. Leif Fall 2. William Shakes 3. Grace Period 4. Coral Reef 5. Vincent Flowers	6. Jemima Duck 7. Lincoln President 8. Satsuma Kyoto 9. November Rain 10. Wendy Miller
 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Baker, Cupcake Independent	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Example regional ballot paper

Voting in person

Registered voters can visit their local polling station between 7am and 10pm on Thursday 6 May to cast their votes. Voters should arrive in plenty of time to avoid missing out on having their say.

- Before polling day, voters will be sent a poll card which includes details of where their polling station is.
- Voters can only vote at the polling station specified on this card.
- Polling station staff will be on hand to explain the ballot paper(s) and how to vote.

Voters do not need to take their poll card with them to the polling station but doing so will speed up the process.

Voting by post

If voters do not wish, or are unable, to go to a polling station, they may apply for a postal vote. Voters may apply for a postal vote for a specific election, a specific period of time, or for all elections. To vote by post, registered electors need to apply for a postal vote before 5pm, Tuesday 20 April 2021.

- Postal ballot papers will be sent directly to voters about a week before polling day.
- Voters should complete their ballot papers and send them back straight away, so they arrive before 10pm on Thursday 6 May.
- Votes arriving after 10pm on Thursday 6 May will not be counted. The only exception is if a person is in a queue at a polling station at 10pm for the purpose of returning a completed postal ballot.
- If voters don't leave enough time to post their vote, they may take it by hand to a polling station in their voting area from 7am to 10pm on polling day.
- Voters must also remember to complete the postal voting statement – with their signature and date of birth or their vote will not be counted.

Voting by proxy

Voters can register for a 'proxy vote'. This means they ask someone they trust to vote on their behalf for the candidate they wish to vote for. They need to complete and sign a form and return it to their local electoral registration office by 5pm, Tuesday 27 April 2021.

What provisions are made to make voting accessible to voters with disabilities?

It is a legal requirement to provide a tactile voting device at every polling station. This allows someone who is blind or partially sighted to mark the ballot paper themselves, once the details on the ballot paper have been read out either by their companion or the

Presiding Officer. In addition, a large print version of the ballot paper must be displayed inside the polling station for the assistance of voters who are partially sighted. Enlarged hand-held copies, marked as 'sample', must also be available to anyone who requires them.

The Commission provides [guidance to polling station staff](#), to help them make sure that polling stations are accessible to everyone. This information is available for staff who are running the local government elections.

Can voters take selfies or other photos in the polling station?

The law relating to obtaining information in polling stations and disclosing such information is complex. Given the risk that someone taking a photo inside a polling station may be in breach of the law, whether intentionally or not, we advise against taking any photos inside polling stations.

Is it ok for someone to take a picture of their postal ballot and post it on social media showing how they have voted?

Postal ballot papers are treated differently in electoral law, compared to polling station ballot papers. A postal voter may take a picture of their own postal ballot paper and publicise it (including via social media).

However, while the postal voter themselves may publicise the information, if someone else persuades or induces them to make this information available, they would be committing an offence. If there are any suggestions or allegations that this could be happening, the person making the complaint should report the matter to the police.

The count

The Electoral Commission has produced a [media handbook](#) with further information on how the voting process will take place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Information in that handbook supplements the information here.

Who is responsible for the count?

Each Returning Officer or Regional Returning Officer decides when the count takes place, taking into account local circumstances.

When will the count start?

In January, the Wales Electoral Coordination Board (WECB) reached a national consensus on count timing for the Senedd and PCC elections that would enable all local authorities in Wales to plan effective count arrangements. This information was shared with parties, candidates, agents and the press, and is available [here](#).

The WECB has now undertaken a further review of count timing and, following discussion with Returning Officers, is aware that in some cases the count could potentially be more time consuming given the reduced number of count staff, available venue size and Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

While the intention is still to complete the constituency and regional counts on Friday 7 May, Regional Returning Officers and Constituency Returning Officers will need to carefully consider progress through the day and will make a decision on whether or not to adjourn the proceedings and continue on the Saturday.

Candidates, agents and the media must be aware of these limitations and be patient and cooperative with the Regional Returning Officer/Returning Officer throughout the proceedings. Ensuring the elections are delivered safely and effectively for all involved remains the priority.

Who can attend the count?

The following people are entitled by law to attend the count:

- the relevant Returning Officer/ Regional Returning Officer and their staff
- candidates and one guest
- election agents
- counting agents
- Electoral Commission representatives

- accredited observers
- any other person permitted to attend by the local Returning Officer

Each Returning Officer or Regional Returning Officer will need to make decisions on how best to control the number of people at the verification and count based on the size of the count venue, and the impact of social distancing measures in place.

Members of the media and photographers who want to attend or film at a count must contact the relevant local Returning Officer to request permission in advance to attend the count and declaration of the results.

How many votes did each party achieve at the last Senedd election?

You can find [information on past Senedd elections results](#) on the Electoral Commission website. You will also find Commission reports on how the election was run.

What happens with spoiled ballot papers?

Once the verification phase of the count is complete, ballot papers will be sorted by candidate and any doubtful ballot papers will be identified. The Returning Officer will adjudicate any doubtful ballot papers in the presence of candidates and agents and the Commission has provided guidance to help them do this.

The RO will announce how many ballot papers were rejected when they announce the results of the election.

Any ballot papers which are considered 'good' in this process are returned and allocated to the relevant candidate.

How does the opening of postal votes fit into the process?

Election staff open returned postal ballot packs up to and on polling day, to check the accompanying personal identifiers (the date of birth and signature of the voter). At these opening sessions, the ballot papers must remain face down and election staff will not count these votes before the close of poll.

Can the result be challenged after it has been announced?

Someone can challenge the result of an election by issuing an election petition. This is a legal action and will be adjudicated by a judge in court.

A petition can be presented by:

- a person claiming to have been a candidate at the election, or

- four people who voted as electors at the election or had a right to vote at the election, except for electors registered anonymously

A petition at a Senedd election must normally be presented within 21 calendar days after the day on which the election was held. Further time may be allowed in certain circumstances.

In 2020, [the Law Commissions recommended that the process for challenging elections should be modernised](#), making it easier for parties to understand and use, and that judges be given the power, in appropriate cases, to limit the potential costs for challengers. The Electoral Commission supports this recommendation. For more information about challenging the result of an election, [see part 6 of the Electoral Commission's guidance for candidates and agents](#).

Electoral Fraud

The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud. The relevant police force for the area in which the election is taking place would investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.

Every police force has a designated single point of contact (known as a SPOC) to lead on election-related crime, who will give advice to local police officers. People can also choose to contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Anyone, including candidates, politicians and members of the public, who has evidence of electoral fraud taking place should report it to the police immediately, using the 101 non-emergency number, unless there is a crime in progress.

What are the criminal offences that relate to electoral fraud?

- **Personation** – where an individual votes as someone else (whether that person is living, dead or fictitious), either by post or at a polling station, in person or as a proxy.
- **Undue influence / intimidation** – A person is guilty of undue influence if they attempt to influence someone's vote by:
 - using or threatening force, violence or restraint
 - inflicting or threatening injury, damage, loss or harm
 - impeding or preventing someone from freely exercising their right to vote – even where the attempt is unsuccessful.
- **Bribery** – A person is guilty of bribery if they directly or indirectly offer any reward (financial or otherwise) in order to induce any voter to vote or refrain from voting.
- **Treating** – A person is guilty of treating if either before, during, or after an election they offer food, drink or entertainment to corruptly influence any voter. Treating requires a corrupt intent - it does not apply to ordinary hospitality.
- **False statements** – It is an offence to make or publish a false statement of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate in order to affect the return of a candidate at an election. False statements that are not about a candidate's personal character or conduct are not illegal under electoral law, but could be considered as libel or slander. It is an offence to knowingly provide a false statement on a nomination paper.
- **Multiple voting and proxy voting offences** – There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting (whether in person, by post or by proxy) when you are not allowed to and voting more than once in the same election.

- **False information in connection with registration and absent voting** – It is an offence to supply false registration information to an Electoral Registration Officer. It is also an offence to supply false information for a postal or proxy vote.

What safeguards are in place to ensure postal voting is secure?

Postal voters have to provide their signature and date of birth when applying for a postal vote and also when casting their postal vote. Both records are checked. If the Returning Officer is not satisfied that they match, the ballot paper is not counted.

The system has been further strengthened by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014. Anyone applying to register to vote first has to provide their National Insurance number and date of birth, before going on to provide the additional information above if they want to cast their vote by post.

Responsibilities for combatting electoral fraud

How does the Commission work with political parties to prevent postal vote fraud?

The Electoral Commission has developed a Code of Conduct for campaigners, which applies to all political parties, candidates and their supporters. It covers the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot packs, behaviour outside polling stations and the reporting of allegations of electoral fraud. In particular, the Code says that parties, candidates and campaigners:

- should never assist in completing a ballot paper - instead, campaigners should always refer the voter to the Returning Officer's staff who may be able to arrange a home visit or provide assistance at the polling station.
- should never handle or take any completed ballot papers from voters. Instead, voters should be encouraged to post their postal ballot pack themselves - alternatively, the Returning Officer's staff may be able to arrange for it to be collected.

The law does not prohibit postal votes from being handled by candidates, parties and campaigners. We want the law changed so that candidates, parties and campaigners do not handle or take completed absent vote applications or postal ballot packs from voters.

What happens if a political party breaches the Code of Conduct?

The code is voluntary. The Electoral Commission asks political parties to investigate any reported breaches and take action to ensure that problems are not repeated. This includes parties potentially taking disciplinary action against their members.

Who is responsible for putting in place plans to deal with electoral fraud?

The primary responsibility lies with the Returning Officer for each area. They work closely with their local police force.

[Guidance on policing elections](#) has been published to support police officers and SPOCs as they put in place plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud in England and Wales. This guidance, which builds on work previously carried out by the Electoral Commission and the National Police Chiefs Council, now forms part of the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice for police forces in England and Wales.